Antibiotic Resistance

What is antibiotic resistance?
Antibiotic resistance occurs when bacteria become resistant to antibiotics typically used to kill the bacteria.

Why are public health officials concerned about antibiotic resistance?
Antibiotic resistance is a growing problem. Virtually all important bacterial infections in the U.S. and worldwide are becoming resistant to antibiotics. When antibiotics become resistant the bacteria survive, multiply and are more difficult to treat. This can cause serious illnesses or even death.

What causes antibiotic resistance?
Antibiotic resistance is due to the misuse and overuse of antibiotics. Antibiotics are often over-prescribed due to demands from patients, time pressure on physicians, and uncertainty about the diagnoses.

When should antibiotics be used?
Viruses cause many common illnesses, such as colds, runny noses and sore throats. Antibiotics are ineffective against viruses. Antibiotics are only helpful when used to treat a bacterial infection and when taken exactly as prescribed.

How can I prevent antibiotic resistance?

- Talk with your health care provider about antibiotic resistance.
- Ask whether an antibiotic is likely to be beneficial for your illness or your child's illness.
- Ask what else you can do to feel better sooner.
- Do not take an antibiotic for a viral infection like a cold or the flu.
- Take an antibiotic exactly as the doctor tells you.
- Take all of the medication, even if the symptoms go away.
- Do not save some of your antibiotic for the next time you get sick.
- Do not take an antibiotic that is prescribed for someone else.

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